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NATIONAL DEFENSE

A SPEECH

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NATIONAL SECURITY LEAGUE ON JANUARY 22, 1916 AT WASHINGTON, D. C.

BY

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United States Senator from Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY MR. WEEKS
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ADDRESS OF SENATOR HENRY CABOT LODGE.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply interested in the purpose for which this National Security League has been formed. I believe your meeting here can not fail to do good in molding and making public opinion. But I think you will agree with me that the most important thing is that this league should so work and should use its power in such a way as to bring practical results in the shape of legislation for national defense. [Applause.] Even were I master of eloquence, I should not attempt it to-night. I merely wish to offer to you a few practical suggestions drawn from some years of observation in Washington.

There are two kinds of questions which it is extremely difficult to argue. One is where the question is new, doubtful, intricate, and complicated. The other is when a question is so simple that it is difficult to understand how there can be any difference of opinion in regard to it. [Laughter.] The subject of national defense belongs, to my mind, in the latter class. [Applause.] The proposition, as I should put it, is something like this: Every nation should have sufficient military and naval defense to maintain its own peace and security. This Nation has not such defense. Therefore it is the duty of this Nation to look to it that such provision is made. It appears to me that this little syllogism is so simple and so obvious that almost anyone with the sight of an average mole could see it. And yet I know there is a great deal of opposition, in a certain way, to the proposition.

I quite agree that it is not a party question. I should be sorry to think that national defense could be a party question. But I will say this that if those gentlemen, of either party or of both parties, who are now standing in the way of national defense do not look to themselves a party will arise somewhere which will carry national defense to completion. [Applause and cheers.] I am not going to enter into details. I shall not attempt to argue that little syllogism which I just ventured on as it might be argued. I could easily keep you here well over Sunday if I should enter upon details relating to either branch of the service. All I desire now is to call your attention to certain facts vividly illustrating what the present condition is and just where you want to go to work. The first thing is to know the facts. There is fortunately no difficulty in knowing the facts about the Army. We have a Secretary of War to whom as an American I feel under great obligations, because he has told us the facts. [Applause.] He has laid his cards on the table. I do not know whether the scheme that he proposes, and which is known as his plan, is the ideally perfect plan to his mind—I very much doubt it—or whether, like other men charged with great responsibility, he is laboring for the best that he can hope to get. [Applause.] But, above all things,

he is telling us all about the War Department. And what is it that we know, when all is told? That we have no Army sufficient to defend the United States. We can not build coast defenses to protect 10,000 or 12,000 miles of coast; that is an absurdity. We can protect, we have partially protected, perhaps, some few great ports. But the defense of the United States by land must lie in a large mobile force. We have no such force. I for one believe that the recommendation of Gen. Leonard Wood and of the War College experts, that we should have a Regular Army to start with of 210,000 men, is right; that that is the least number. [Applause.]

I believe that behind that Regular Army there should be a large reserve mobile force. Mr. Putnam has told you, what we all know, I think, that in one foreign country, at least, plans have been made with a view to landing in this country, and that in 40 days they could land an army of 360,000 men, thoroughly equipped. Now, the only way to meet such a force is to have a mobile army to meet them wherever they land. You can not, I repeat, have fortifications everywhere. You must have your mobile force. Last year our mobile force, all Regulars, was 24,000 men. You ought to have an army outnumbering by at least two to one any hostile force that can be landed. How, as a preliminary, are you going to find out where the enemy is, and where they are going to land? We have no aeroplanes. How are you going to move your men and supplies once you leave the railroads? You have not even got motor trucks in your Army. We are deficient in field artillery. We have no large reserves of ammunition upon which success in war now depends. Above all, I repeat, you have not got the men. You ought to have at least a million men who can at any moment be called to the colors as a reserve. [Applause.] Whether it can best be done by the federalization of the militia—a matter of some constitutional difficulty—or whether, as I believe it must be eventually done, by a national force, it ought to be, it must be, done. Every citizen in a democracy ought to have the same rights and the same duties. [Applause.] We all ought to bear the burdens equally, the burdens of taxation and of military service. The universal liability to military service does not, however, necessarily mean that we must carry out the Swiss system to the fullest extent, and have an army of twelve or fifteen millions, but with that universal liability we must have and we can get the million men we want.

We have not got them now. We have practically no military defense on land. It is an ugly thing to say, but we could be conquered to-morrow by any nation able to land on our coast 300,000 to 400,000 men thoroughly equipped in the best modern way. We are as brave a people as live, as the mayor of New York so justly said, but bravery unarmed means useless sacrifice of the best men. We are ready to fight, but an unarmed people can not fight a fully armed and equipped body of 400,000 men. And how are the bravest people in the world to spring to arms when they have no arms to spring to? [Applause and laughter.] That is why I say that we are defenseless by land, and defense we must have, and we must have it at once.

I now come to the Navy. Let me repeat that I speak in no party sense, and that I do not regard this as a party question; but I have been in Congress more years than I am eager to confess, and I think

that I know Congress fairly well, and where the blame rests for our not being defended as we ought to be at this moment. Administrations come and go. With scarcely an exception let me say that every Secretary of War and every Secretary of the Navy whom I have known has tried—some more vigorously, some more successfully, than others, of course, but they have all tried—to build up the forces intrusted to his charge. The responsibility for not being defended to-day as we ought to be lies at the door of Congress. [Applause.] I am ready to take my blame with the rest, but I know where the blame lies. It is no new thing. When Washington was on the eve of final victory, just before the siege of Yorktown, perhaps you do not recall what Congress were proposing to do? They were proposing at that moment to reduce the Army. Some things change and others do not. [Laughter and applause.]

I served some years ago on the Naval Committee of the House of Representatives. I am at this moment a member of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, and ever since I have been in Washington I have tried to inform myself in regard to the Navy. I do not know as much about it as my friend Mr. Padgett, chairman of the House Naval Committee, who, I think, has as thorough a knowledge of naval affairs as any man in public life—more thorough, indeed. [Applause.] I have had the honor to serve with him on conference committees, and I know the extent of his knowledge. Yet even in his presence I venture to say that I know something about the Navy, but I am far from knowing it all, and the country knows very little. We see a display of naval ships in the Hudson River, and the people go home with a comfortable feeling that they have got a great and splendid Navy, because they do not at all understand what a really complete and efficient navy is. During the Spanish War there was a New England port, which shall be nameless, one of many where they felt that they were in danger of attack from the Spanish cruisers. It was not exceptional, because that feeling existed in all Atlantic ports, south as well as north, and in common with many other ports it wanted protection. I labored to get them protection. I finally secured for this particular port an old monitor of the Civil War, with one large smoothbore gun. It was towed down to that port with some difficulty and anchored in the harbor, and they were perfectly satisfied. [Laughter.] The moral is that a navy may have some very fine ships and yet be wholly inadequate as a fighting force, and it is not to be expected that the people will understand the real condition of the Navy unless it is honestly explained to them.

The difficulty of obtaining accurate knowledge is shown by the fact that those who are most immediately charged with the care of the Navy are guilty of mistakes. The President said in his message:

> If this full program should be carried out, we should have built or building in 1921, according to the estimates of survival and standards of classification—

I call your attention to that language—

> followed by the General Board of the department, an effective Navy consisting of 27 battleships of the first line, 6 battle cruisers, and 25 battleships of the second line.

The Secretary of the Navy in his annual report says:

> If this program is carried out, accepting the General Board estimates of survival for present vessels—

That is 20 years; some say 15, but we will take it at 20 as the life limit of a modern battleship—

the Navy will be composed of the following vessels, built or building, in 1921: Battleships, first line, 27; battle cruisers, 6; battleships, second line, 25.

There can be no mistake about the battle cruisers, because we have none, and those six are in the President's program, and there is no item of his program which is better than that. Battleships of the first line, 27—that includes 17 ships now built or building, and 10 according to the program; but the 25 battleships of the second line puzzled me. I wrote to the Secretary of the Navy and asked him if he would give me the names of the battleships of the second line. He replied, very kindly, that I could find them in the report of the General Board annexed to his report. I wrote back to him that I had already read that appendix, but that the report of the General Board did not seem to me to agree with his statement, and that was why I asked for the names of the ships. I have had no answer to this last letter. [Laughter.]

But here is what the General Board said, to which the Secretary referred me:

Dreadnaughts of the first line, 17.

Then there are the 10 added under the program, making a total of 27; correct.

Dreadnaughts of the second line—

I am reading from the report of the General Board now—

Dreadnaughts of the second line, 13.
Superannuated dreadnaughts of the third line—

Ships that will then be over 20 years old, each one—

nine.
Harbor-defense battleships, 3—

The *Indiana*, the *Massachusetts*, and the *Oregon*, authorized in 1890, commissioned in 1895.

The 25 of the second line as given by the President and the Secretary of the Navy were made up of 13 put in that line by the General Board, of 9 excluded from that line by the General Board because they were not in accordance with their estimates of survival, and of 3 now more than 20 years old, which the General Board rank as only fit for harbor defense.

I am merely calling attention, by giving you these varying statements, to some of the difficulties in the way of getting at facts.

Now, take the submarines. I could talk about the submarines all night. [Laughter.] One hundred and fifty-seven in 1921 was the number given us by the President and the Secretary. Dear old boats some of them will be then. That 157 includes every submarine that has been built from the beginning starting in 1902. Some of them are absolutely useless now, and everybody knows it. There is not a seagoing submarine among those now existing. I believe *F*–4, which sank in the harbor of Honolulu, is no longer carried on the list. [Laughter.] But it was carried on the list as late as last August.

Then there is the shortage of men. The Secretary has sent in the report of Admiral Fletcher, made on the 15th of August last, and

in that report he describes the shortage of men. At the June inspection one division was short 1,350 men. Mine layers were 25 per cent short in their complement. The department has reduced the complement of destroyers by 25 per cent. It is reported that at the battle-efficiency inspection of the *Utah* a chief petty officer was in charge of one turret and an ensign of 1914 in charge of another. The *Florida* was short 29 officers, the *Utah* 28, the *Michigan* 21, and the *South Carolina* 16. A pay clerk and a yeoman were in charge of the plotting room, doing the work which should have been done by commissioned officers.

Admiral Fletcher, the commander in chief, says that such reports are of frequent occurrence, and in his own conclusions points out specifically that the fleet needs more officers and more men; that whatever be the number of men available for complements of the ships in the active fleet should be kept full, and that if ships can not be kept fully in commission with full complement they should be put in reserve.

He says, also, in this same report, that we need mine-laying and mine-sweeping vessels. He gives a comparison between the *Delaware* and the *Bellerophon* and the *Helgoland*, which I need not go into, as to the number of officers. He refers to the unsatisfactory condition of the submarines, their limitations of mobility, the lack of air craft, the lack of any radio direction finder, the lack of mine-laying and mine-sweeping vessels.

I need not go on. The report is worthy your consideration if you want to get at the facts and learn how absolutely inadequate and how far from high efficiency our Navy is. We have no scouts. We have no fast battle cruisers. The *Blucher*, which was sunk in the North Sea, was sunk because she was the slowest of the German ships. She was faster than any ship in our Navy! We need battle cruisers; we need scouts; we need aeroplanes, and we need speed in supplying these deficiencies. [Great applause.]

The Secretary said the other day before the House committee, if he was correctly reported, that it took three years to build a battleship. Let me ask your attention—these are dry facts—to the history of the two last superdreadnaughts authorized, battleships *Nos. 43* and *44*, authorized on March 3, 1915. Congress did its duty, let me say, as to those two battleships. The Secretary of the Navy decided to build these ships at New York and Mare Island. It is now nearly a year since the authorization. The material for *No. 43*, to be built at the New York Yard, has been ordered, I believe, and is in process of being assembled. [Laughter.] The *California* is on the ways at the New York Navy Yard, however, and is not expected to be off the ways before September or October. I take the Secretary's own statement. Therefore *No. 43*, authorized March 3, 1915, can not have her keel laid before that time—18 months after her authorization!

It may be possible that we can not build a battleship in two years, as England and Germany do; but we can build it in three years, and we ought to be able to get rid of those 18 months which make it four and a half years for an American battleship.

No. 44 is to be built at Mare Island. There are ways there, but they are not large enough to take a superdreadnaught, and must

be extended. There is not money enough to do it. Congress must either appropriate money especially for that purpose or authorize the Secretary to use some of the money appropriated for the ships. I do not think this authority has yet been given. It may have passed the House.

Representative PADGETT. No, sir; it is pending in the House. It has been reported by the committee.

Senator LODGE. It is pending in the House, then. The ship now on the ways, which it will be necessary to have off the ways before the superdreadnaught can be begun, will probably be launched in September, 1916. If the money is authorized for the extension of the ways—and I hope and believe it will be—that can be accomplished before the launching of the ship now on the ways; but if the money is not obtained there will be still further delay.

It is said on good authority that England and Germany have been building seagoing submarines of 800 or 1,000 tons, capable of going around the north of England or into the Mediterranean, at the rate of one a month. We then hear flourishing statements about our great seagoing submarines. Yes; three have been authorized, but we have not got them. I am glad they are authorized, but I want them in the water, where they can be used, and not simply floating harmlessly in acts of Congress.

The *Schley* was the first large submarine authorized. It was authorized on the 30th of June, 1914. The contract was let the following March—March of 1915. In the bulletin of January 10, 1916, it appears that nothing has been done upon her yet. How long do you thing is the contract time for the *Schley*, the first of our seagoing submarines? I was astonished to find out. Thirty-six months—three years! She is not contracted to be delivered until March, 1918; and if we want submarines, we want them now! [Applause.] As for the two authorized last year, nearly a year ago—*60* and *61*—nothing has been done about them at all. These are all mere illustrations. But they are the facts. Do not forget that the worst thing that can befall us is to be deceived by others or deceive ourselves as to our Navy.

The House Naval Committee is hard at work preparing its bill, having the valuable hearings which it is necessary to have, and working as hard and intelligently on the bill as it is possible, I know. The House Military Committee, unless I am misinformed, is considering a bill which appropriates for exactly the same Army that we have now. The Senate Military Committee is holding hearings and is doing excellent work. It has had before it Gen. Wood, Gen. Carter, and other officers of the Army, who are telling the committee and telling the country the exact truth and what the country needs. [Applause.] That committee is preparing good work. The Senate Naval Committee is engaged in the great and burning question of building an armor plant. [Laughter.]

Now, I recognize that perhaps it may be necessary by and by to have an armor plant. I am very doubtful about it at any time, but I am certain that we do not want to put ten millions into an armor plant now. What we want now is ships and men and submarines and aeroplanes. [Great applause.] I know there is a great argument behind the armor plant. I know that if the armor plant is

not built it is possible—perhaps probable, but certainly possible—that some great industrial plant in private hands may make some money out of the manufacture of armor. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it is more important to keep the enemy from our shores than to devote our attention to preventing Americans from making money. [Applause.] I know well the immense time and thought which has been given to that question of preventing Americans from making money [laughter], and I do not underrate its importance; but I think that at this moment what we want to do is to give the Navy the things of which it is in such sore need. The Navy is the first line of defense. [Great applause.] While we control the seas, the United States is safe. We have two great coasts to defend. I do not quite agree with my friend Mr. Putnam about Chicago's indifference to New York and Boston. As an American, the knowledge that San Francisco or New Orleans or Chicago is in danger from an enemy or damaged by a foe comes just as near home to me as if Boston were attacked. [Great applause.] I was born in Boston. I have lived there. I love it. But there is something I love more, and that is the whole great country; and any enemy who touches any part of that country touches me. [Great applause.]

Now, a word as to the sources of the opposition which you will have to meet, which you will have to deal with, representing as you do the people, the voters of this country. It is of various sorts in Congress. There are some who think that the first thing to be done is to put the Government into business in every direction—into munitions, into armor, into everything—resting, as I say, on the great principle that if they do not some private American citizen may make money. Then there are those who want to spend the people's money elsewhere, to scatter it through the country in the name of good roads, to improve rivers and harbors, and to build public buildings. You will see the newspapers refer to it in their graceful way [laughter] as the "pork barrel"; and you would suppose, from what you read in the newspapers, that all this was due to the natural depravity of Congressmen and Senators—that they wanted to have public buildings and river and harbor appropriations for unnavigable streams and impossible harbors, because they themselves were naturally bad and rejoiced in evil for its own sake. I assure you that is a very great mistake. The amount of pleasure—even among those Congressmen and Senators who are fond of art—the amount of architectural pleasure that they derive from a post office in a country town [laughter] is not enough to govern their votes. They want those things for the very simple and human reason—I know; I have been one of them for a long time—that they think their constituents want them, and they think procuring them means votes. And just as long as Congressmen and Senators, or any considerable number of them, think there are more votes in river and harbor appropriations and public buildings appropriations than there are in appropriations for the national defense, they will continue to give the preference to the former. [Applause.]

That seems a harsh thing to say. The truth is not infrequently both harsh and unpleasant. I know there are many men in both Houses who will vote for great appropriations for national defense without a thought as to whether it is going to benefit them personally

or not. [Applause.] I dare say there are many men in both Houses who would vote for appropriations for rivers and harbors and public buildings without a thought as to whether it would benefit them or not, although I must confess that that proposition is perhaps not quite so certain as the other. [Laughter.] But if you would have Congress take up national defense, both for the Army and for the Navy, as you think it ought to be taken up, you will let them understand that there is a great body of voters in this country, north, south, east, and west, who are determined that their country shall be defended!

I have no doubt that the great mass of the American people wish their country to be put in a state of proper defense. You all believe so. Bring this fact home, then, to those who represent them. Make the Senators and Congressmen understand it. Begin at the primary and go with them to the polls in support if you can, in opposition if you must, and you will be surprised at the rapidity of the educational process, and you will get plenty of support at the Capitol. [Applause.] But you must come down to that practical side, as every great question has to come to it finally. You must demonstrate to the Representative or the Senator that the people who send him here want this thing done; and when the American people make it clear to the House and Senate that they are in earnest about national defense you will have it, and you are not likely to get it much sooner in a proper and sufficient way. [Applause.]

I have taken much more time than I intended, and I only desire to say one word in conclusion. No one can think that provision for national defense is more essential, more vital, than I do. But there is a side to it that goes even deeper. It has been alluded to by the mayor of New York, and I can do little more than repeat his words; but they are words which can not be too often repeated. In this question of national defense lies a test of democracy, whether it is worthy to live, whether it has the foresight, the self-control, the spirit of unity which will lead it to take these precautions which it must take if it is to survive at all in a world so uncertain and so perilous as this.

We covet no one's territory. We seek no adventures. We have an immense domain of our own, still to be developed. We desire, if we can, to distribute the riches of our heritage so that all shall benefit and not merely a few. We would fain, if we could, turn our attention to the needs of the great classes of our own people to whom life is hard. We would like to do something to help old age. We would like to improve in every way that we can the condition of our own people. What is necessary for us in order to achieve that which we desire? Peace and security. They speak of the Monroe doctrine as a foreign policy. It is not a foreign policy; it is a mere law of self-preservation. We wish to be at peace and we wish to be secure.

Now, these being our desires, have we made our acts and our policies correspond with them? You wish to have peace and security. Have you done what is necessary to make sure that you and those who come after you will have peace and security? You certainly have not done it yet. You lie open to the world, rich, tempting, an easy prey to the armed. There are those who say, "Exhausted Europe will never attack us." That is the argument of the

"didn't-know-it-was-loaded" gentlemen who add so largely to the bills of mortality. Not attack us! There is no nation on earth so dangerous as a nation fully armed and bankrupt at home. [Applause.] The only time in our history when we were fully prepared was at the close of the Civil War. We had a great veteran Army. We had the largest fleet in existence. We had a debt of $3,000,000,000, which looked enormous then. Our currency seemed to be hopelessly depreciated. Financially speaking, we were bankrupt. Yet there never was a moment in the history of the United States when she was so dangerous to her neighbors as in 1865.

You can always get money, apparently, in this world for powder and shot. War ended in Europe, a nation there armed to the teeth, crippled financially, with large claims growing out of Mexico: shall I go on? Do you think that presents a safe condition? Such a condition is highly dangerous. No nation is safe while the world is as it is; and our duty is to make sure of our peace, our security, our freedom. Is the ideal of democracy merely to accumulate money, to live in comfort, to amuse ourselves from day to day? Is that the true ideal of democracy? Not to my mind. I believe that the ideal of democracy is written in the American Revolution and in the Civil War: the great ideal which Abraham Lincoln typified, that life, that wealth, that everything was as nothing compared to liberty and freedom; and that this Nation should be free and remain free; that we should be able to continue the democracy which we have set up. And now, with other democracies fighting for their lives, are we to remain still and do nothing to preserve our own?

In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see my country's honor fade;
Oh! let me see our land retain its soul!
Her pride in Freedom, and not Freedom's shade.

[Great applause.]

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